

circumscribing line need not be restricted to one curve. Among structures of this class justly celebrated for their beauty, we sometimes see a straight upright line crowned by a single curve or ogee; while some, on the contrary, St. Stephen's, Vienna, for instance, presents one beautiful ogree curve in the tower, receiving harmoniously the straight line of the spire: Bow Church, London, is a repeated ogree: St. Bride's steeple, however, is a slight convex curve, too slight rather, forming one lofty pointed arch. If abstract beauty were the sole aim in architecture, a series of beautiful curves, mainly repetitions of Hogarth's line of beauty, would be the actual contour of most buildings. But structural and expressional requirements in an art that is to fill at once the mind as well as the eye, demanding other lines and forms than these, confine purely æsthetic considerations to the general outline, and to the details and ornaments, against which they do but little militate.

Yet this application of abstract beauty, though thus limited, is of magical effect to architecture. In the more graceful of its productions, all manner of fair forms are suggested to the imagination: over such, an ideal form of beauty, modified somewhat by each susceptible fancy, invests as it were the whole in a mantle of light.

There are principles, however, besides beauty of outline, to be sought and embodied in these works: there is power of effect,—expression of definite character; and these have more frequently been neglected in the Italian style than in the Gothic.

Wren's towers and spires have been celebrated for their beauty, and for their constructive ingenuity: the latter quality in a greater or less degree they undoubtedly all possess; and in point of beauty I think many of them are worthy of all praise, not only for the design of the spires, but for the graceful manner in which they unite with their supporting towers, and the great beauty of their outlines. I consider, however, that the interiors of some of his churches evince more ingenuity, greater victory over untoward circumstances, and more of the skill of the geometer, combined with the pure taste and inventive power of the artist, than any of his spires. And when I see by some of his interiors, and by his steeple of St. Mary-le-Bow, how much he was capable of his mastery of geometrical form, I am surprised that he should have allowed beauty so frequently to escape him in designing the most prominent objects of the city. While Bow Church is crowned by one of the most graceful steeples in the world, two or three of the productions of the same class by the same eminent hand are amongst the most indifferent objects of the metropolis.

Wren's steeples were to distinguish the house of prayer when it could not be otherwise distinguished than by such features towering above the street dwelling-houses, within which the body of the church was too often almost entirely concealed; and however well this purpose was answered, and however great the scientific skill embodied in their construction, it may be urged against the whole of them that they are wanting in that simplicity and solemnity that should characterise the sacred fane of religion, and which I am well persuaded it is within the power of the Greek and Roman style, as it was within the power of the architect, to have effected. They have answered their purpose, doubtless; but, by association, and not by abstract qualities do they express the solemn object of the edifices to which they are appended.

It is, I consider, unfortunate for the art generally, that Wren so far failed, as his unquestionable eminence caused these to become types of a host of pagoda-like spires. Wren had a few able successors, and among them Gibbs, who produced one or two beautiful spires,—St. Martin-in-the-Fields, St. Mary-le-Strand; but they are open to the same objections as those I have urged against Wren's, viz. want of solemnity; and among later edifices of the class, I know none that I could hold up as a model except that of All Saints', Oxford, by Dean Aldrich. Of this church, simplicity and power are the great charm: it

is in most respects the best I have seen. Its peculiarities are—1st. A circular peristyle (only one) placed immediately on a square tower, and receiving delicacy by contrast with it, while none of the paltry expedients to prevent abruptness in the transition from square to round, which are generally productive of eyesores, are here resorted to. 2nd. The columns are thickly set, which gives the circular temple an effect of richness and solidity so far in keeping with spire and tower; qualities which are lacking in most other structures of the kind, their columns being in general thinly set, and their ensemble presenting a tame and meagre aspect: 3rd. The spire is small, as it should be, as if conscious, so to picture it, of not being quite at home in the style; and the whole presents a circumscribing outline, such, that whether seen by sunlight, or moonlight, or twilight, it is always beautiful.

The spire, I remarked, was kept small; now spires of Classic or Italian, and spires of Gothic churches, are totally different features, and call for different proportion and different treatment. How sensible Wren was of this fact may be gathered from the smallness of his Italian steeples generally. Indeed, it would seem as if it were to get rid of as much spire as possible that he repeated his different stages an often with increasing diminution; and Gibbs, in St. Martin's, truncated it evidently to divest it of some portion of its Gothic character. Indeed, the proper crowning of such steeples is not the pyramidal spire, but the dome, either hemispherical or ogree in section. With the dome, however, in these comparatively small features, there is great danger of perpetrating that bugbear of architectural designers and heir-loom of critics, ycleped the pepper-box.

The great charm of Aldrich's steeple, I remarked, lies in its simplicity and power. Complexity and tameness are the characteristics of most later ones. Piling order upon order in mid-air to the extent sometimes practised in these works, seems a jesting with classic architecture, and produces, at least, but so many rivals of the pagoda. Neither in St. George's Church nor in St. Michael's of this town (Liverpool) have the architects made suitable provision for light and shade, or caught the secret of general effect in the composition, which is contrast between the form of the orders or stories. St. George's presents the transition from an octagon to a circle with no increase of columnar richness, and, consequently, looks weak and tame; and St. Michael's Church, though far more effective, rises but from a square to a slightly-expressed cross; while All Saints' Church, Oxford, breaks at once from a plain square tower to a rich thicket circular peristyle, the square basement giving increased effect to the latter, which strikes at once with its classic and artistic beauty.

We must fail in such works unless we look not only for inspiration of beauty on the fairer forms of nature, but also for models of power on her grander and sublimer imagery.

This brings me to an important point in my subject: we must bear in mind that there are other qualities to be expressed in architecture than those elegant ones embodied by the pyramidal. I am here again at issue with Barbotineau, who says the most perfect architectural composition is that which forms one immense pyramid of decoration, consisting of many minor subservient pyramidal masses. Now, these conditions would exclude, besides the Greek temple, which he names as an exception, the Italian palaces, and other great buildings of acknowledged power and beauty. In fact, it is true of but one class of buildings, viz. all graceful and elegant buildings. Of all grand and sublime buildings it is not a condition. Of the greatest and sublimest, such as would strike terror into the beholder, the very reverse is the form,—the inverted pyramid; and I consider the pyramidal mass, and the inverted pyramidal mass stands, in theory, at the two extremes of the graceful, and the sublime or awful, in architecture.

The latter principle is carried to its utmost practical result in lofty towers with overhanging battlements, or jutting turrets. But though

limited in its application, it is of great value in architecture; and Runkin, who refers to it in treating on the power of magnitude and height, has not overrated it; for architecture exerts great power over the imagination by bold and abrupt projections, which, from being suggestive of great constructive power, excites emotions of awe and wonder in the beholder. Imagine the effect of this kind, produced by a tower such as the Victoria Tower at Westminster, with a top jutting story of some 30 feet projection, and 50 or 60 feet high. The effect to a person standing under it, though no danger were apprehended, would be terrific. Of course, this principle can seldom be applied; but the perpendicular form, which is the central one between the two extremes I have mentioned, and which is an expression of great grandeur and power in itself, is always or mostly practicable; and this may be made more powerful generally by bold and sudden projections, as cornices or balustrades.

On the subject of decoration, I would, in the first place, observe that a building is decorated, and in no small degree when it is beautifully and truthfully designed and executed. The architectural forms are decoration in themselves, and the greater the building,—the more sublime its component features, the less it needs the ministry of the sculptor or painter: a dome, for instance, of pure form and majestic proportions, asks us for but little ornament. But there is a dignity in an architectural member, though far less pleasing in itself, when truthfully fulfilling an important and indispensable office to which it is properly fitted in obedience to the laws of constructive science, that tells upon the feelings, and becomes an artistic object, however unfavoured by the sculptor or painter. Truth is the first decoration, and the foundation for all real embellishment; and a rafter, beam, or joist, rough from the carpenter, is pleasanter to the eye of pure taste than idle features, however beautiful in themselves, or than improper or senseless ornament. And the main thing, on the application of further embellishment, is to take care that these forms be not hidden or marred, but that it (the embellishment) should further set forth and explain their nature, and be in strict harmony with it. Architectural ornament should be used like wit, which is best employed to illustrate and adorn truth. All ornament must be chosen in reference, and be made duly subordinate to the forms on which it reposes, according to the way of nature; a rule that has often been flagrantly violated, and never more so, I think, than in the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral. I well remember my surprise when I first stood under that celebrated concave, to find that in effect there is after all no dome. Now, the great error of this painting of Thornhill's is not the material of its ornament,—its being, for the greater part, as Ruskin would term it, man's work instead of God's work;—the great error of this performance is its existence there. No matter what its artistic merits: were its historical part the best work of Raphael, it is worse than worthless on the dome of St. Paul's. If Wren agreed to his dome being thus covered, it was the greatest mistake on his part that ever a great man made. This painting renders the whole dome a farce—virtually annihilates it. Sir C. Wren achieved a great coup de main to his colossal church worthy of the noble composition. Sir James Thornhill falls to work immediately, not to enhance its beauties by an application of the treasures of his art, not to make it a more beautiful dome, but to prevent its manifesting itself as a dome at all; (for such unquestionably is the result of the architectural device forming the frame of the paintings); to make it look like something else,—a cylindrical arcade: to paint it out, in short, as if the architect had made a mistake in placing it there.

Taking warning by such errors, we must proceed to consider what is the source of our ornamentation,—what it is to consist of,—what its extent; a subject which, however difficult, should be treated more independently than it generally is; as I consider a great deal of time has been lost in considerations of what the Greeks and other